Appalachia

Volume 72
Number 1 *Winter/Spring 2021: Mountains in a Pandemic*

Article 20

2021

Letters

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A Tribute to Gene Daniell, from a *White Mountain Guide* Co-Author

On December 11, 2019, New Hampshire lost one of its truly original and unique individuals, Eugene "Gene" Daniell, with whom I had the pleasure of working for over a decade on the 25th and 26th editions of the AMC *White Mountain Guide* and the first edition of the AMC *Southern New Hampshire Trail Guide*.

Gene and I met on a beautiful late-summer day in September 1982 on the summit of Mount Jefferson—he with his two young children and I with mine. He told me about his work on "the book," and I challenged him that one day we would work on it together.

Six years later, I got in touch with him to remind him of my commitment, and he challenged me back by assigning me chapter 2 of the guide—wheel, measure, and log—and never expected to hear from me again. Chapter 2 covers the Northern Presidential Range (Mounts Clay, Jefferson, Adams, Madison), which has by far the steepest, roughest, and arguably most beautiful trails in our mountains. The way mileages are measured in the book is by taking a surveyor's wheel with 800 rotations to the mile and rolling this wheel over every rock, cliff, crevice, and stream and thus calculating the mileage to the nearest 0.01 mile.

I completed the challenge in three weeks, and a partnership was born that lasted over a decade. Our division of labor initially was that I would hike and measure each and every trail, and Gene would take my measurements and observations and convert them into trail descriptions. Eventually he began trusting me with the writing. I would send him the log along with a draft description, which he always found a way to make more eloquent. We eventually broke the guide (which we had begun calling "the brick" because it had become so large and cumbersome) into two books, dividing the trails of the White Mountain National Forest with those trails south of that region into the southern guide.

My favorite part of the project was visiting him in his home in Concord amid his stacks and stacks of stacks and stacks. He collected copies of anything pertaining to the New Hampshire outdoors. His home was a library unlike any I had ever seen, organized in a labyrinth that only he could decipher. We would

go over the copy of each trail description and then debate for hours whether a trail was very steep, steep, rather steep, moderately steep, or somewhat steep. His acerbic wit, erudite mind, and endlessly curious intellect was a source of great pleasure, and I never tired of our time together. His friendship, collaboration, and unique way of looking at the world equaled the joy for me of exploring every inch of our state's extraordinary 2,000-plus miles of trail.

Gene shared an indelible part of my life, and I will always be grateful for the time we shared doing something that was such a great source of passion and pleasure for us both. I hope that wherever his spirit resides, he will finally be able to peakbag to his heart's content without any further limit of body or time.

—Jon Burroughs, Glen, New Hampshire

Common Loons on Squam Lake

I am writing to provide some clarifications to the article, "Common Loons Struggle on a Lake That Should Be Perfect for Them" (Research, Winter/Spring 2020), for which I was interviewed.

The article stated that one of the problems facing Squam Lake's loons is "leaking chemicals outlawed years ago but still used to kill insects." It is important to note that the Loon Preservation Committee (LPC) has found a wide range of contaminants that may be impacting Squam Lake's loons. While insecticides such as DDT and chlordane are some of these contaminants, they also include PCBs [polychlorinated biphenyls], dioxins/furans, flame retardants, and PFAS contaminants [per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, industrial chemicals]. We do not believe the insecticides or other legacy contaminants like PCBs, dioxins, and furans are currently in use. These contaminants have been banned for decades and their use is illegal, but they do persist in the environment. We believe the legacy contaminants we discovered in Squam loon eggs and the Squam watershed were applied to the landscape prior to being banned and, at least in the case of the DDT we found in sediments, have recently become mobilized. Also, we do not know whether these contaminants are leaking into the environment. We do not have proof of that with the insecticides, although it is a possibility, and we suspect another mechanism for the known site of PCB, dioxin, and furan contamination.

The article also stated that, in response to the decline in Squam's loon population between 2005 and 2007, "Scientists began to question the water quality." What occurred at this time was that LPC tested unhatched loon

eggs from failed nests and found elevated levels of chemical contaminants in Squam eggs compared with loon eggs from other lakes. The discovery and ongoing testing of contaminants in unhatched loon eggs from failed nests has been an important part of LPC's research on Squam, links these contaminants directly to loons, and led to our testing of crayfish and sediments and subsequent discovery of areas of contaminated sediments in the watershed, which was referenced in the article.

Subsequent to this research showing elevated levels of contaminants in loon eggs, LPC has been emphasizing the need for a broader definition of water quality, but it needs to be put in the context that these contaminants biomagnify and bioaccumulate as they move through the food web. It does not suggest that swimming, boating, and other recreational water activities are a problem on Squam. However, given the movement of these contaminants through the food web and the levels we found in Squam loon eggs and tributary sediments, the recent issuance of a fish consumption advisory on Squam due to elevated levels of PCBs is not surprising.

Finally, I would like to clarify the statement in the article, "Loons were shot in apparent protest by fishers in spring 2014." Two loons were shot in spring 2014 with rifle slugs and federal investigations were carried out, as loons are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, but the perpetrators were not found and there is no proof as to their motivation and whether or not they were anglers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these clarifications, and thank you for highlighting the plight of loons on Squam Lake in *Appalachia*.

—Tiffany Grade, Moultonborough, New Hampshire

Tiffany Grade is the Squam Lakes biologist for the Loon Preservation Committee.

Editor's note: In the article, which I reported and wrote, the list of possible predators should have included ring-billed gulls (not ring-necked gulls). I should have clarified that the screening on the floating rafts created for common loons to nest is made with natural vegetation; the top is covered with manufactured material. As Grade notes, loons are protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act; they are a state-threatened species in New Hampshire but not a federally listed one. The LPC has banded at least twenty loons on Squam Lake—more than "several" as the article said. In both 2016 and 2017 but not 2015, a single chick survived on Squam Lake.

—Christine Woodside